ERN RAMPE

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DE DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL

POLICY CONCEPTS

THE COOPERS & LYBRAND CONSULTING GROUP

Employability Resources Network

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) is a three-year demonstration project funded by Employment and Immigration Canada under the Innovations program.

ERN is the responsibility of three organizations: The Canadian Council on Social Development, The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group, and The Norton Group.

ERN's purpose is to explore and evaluate methods for helping unemployed people get off social assistance and back into the job market, through employability programs currently under way across Canada.

ERN will select at least 10 to 15 demonstration projects for an in-depth evaluation of the different approaches used to help social assistance recipients and others re-enter the labour force. It will assess the projects' effectiveness for different groups, such as older unemployed workers, women, native people, disabled persons, visible minorities and youth.

ERN will establish a standardized framework for evaluating employability enhancement projects. The framework will provide useful information not only for government policy-makers, but also for business, social service and employment agencies, and program administrators.

ERN will develop an information resource centre. It will include an inventory of national and international employment projects, an evalution data base and a documentation library. A communications network will serve organizations and individuals in the employment enhancement field.

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Information Resources: CCSD
Demonstration Evaluation: Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
Quebec Liaison: CCSD (514) 288-1687

Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi

Le projet Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi (RAMPE) est un projet témoin d'une durée de trois ans financé par Emploi et Immigration Canada dans le cadre du programme Innovations.

Trois organisations assument la responsabilité de RAMPE : le Conseil canadien de Développement social, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group et Le Norton Group.

Le mandat de RAMPE est d'explorer et d'évaluer, dans le cadre de programmes d'amélioration des possibilitiés d'emploi ayant cours dans l'ensemble du Canada, différentes formules pouvant aider les chômeurs à se soustraire à l'aide sociale et à réintégrer le marché du travail.

RAMPE sélectionnera dix à quinze projets témoins pour évaluer minutieusement les différentes stratégies favorisant la réinsertion des assistés sociaux et d'autres personnes sur le marché du travail. Il appréciera l'efficacité des projets visant différents groupes tels que les chômeurs d'un certain âge, les femmes, les autochtones, les handicapés, les minorités visibles et les jeunes.

RAMPE élaborera un schéma d'évaluation destiné aux projets d'amélioration des débouchés. Ce schéma fournira des renseignements utiles non seulement aux décideurs politiques du gouvernement, mais aussi aux entreprises, aux organismes de services sociaux et d'emploi, et aux administrateurs de programmes.

RAMPE créera également un centre national de documentation. Celui-ci comprendra l'inventaire des programmes d'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi mis en place au Canada et à l'étranger, une base de données sur l'évaluation et un centre de documentation. Un réseau de communication sera à la disposition des organismes et des particuliers qui s'occupent de l'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi.

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91-03628/

REPORT ON THE EVALUATION STUDY OF THE FUTURES PROGRAM OF THE COLUMBIA INSTITUTE OF CANADA

Edition 1.1

April, 1990

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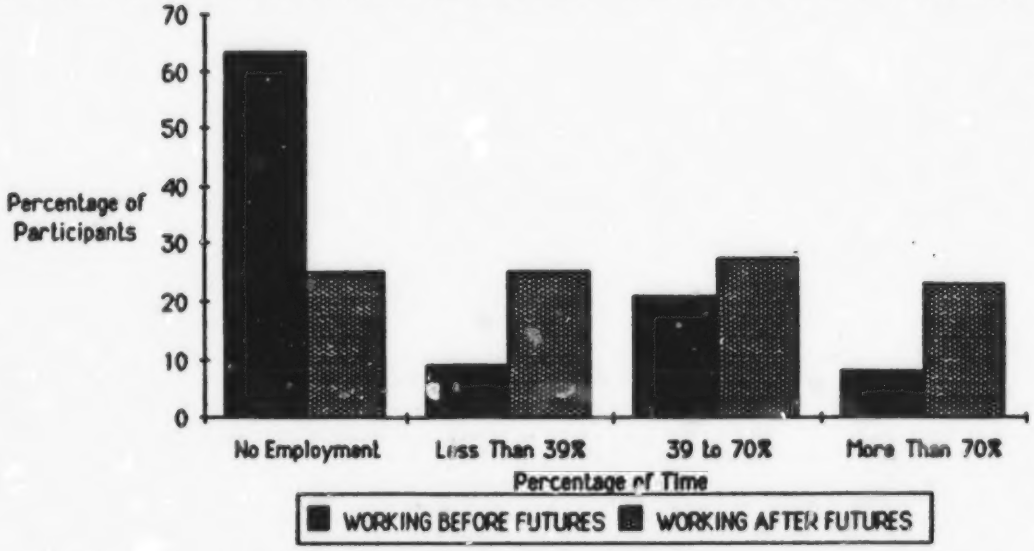
SUMMARY EXHIBIT 1a: PARTICIPANTS WORKING BEFORE AND AFTER FUTURES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conclusions

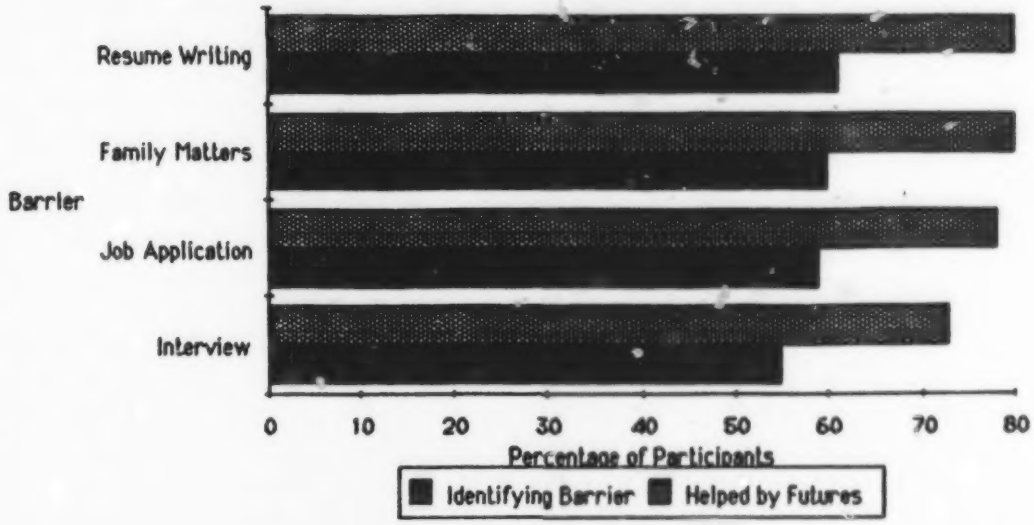
The Futures Program is successful in enhancing the employability of the individuals who participate. The program improved participants' ability to obtain and maintain employment. Summary Exhibit 1a shows that a much smaller proportion of Futures participants were unemployed in the six months following the program than in the six months preceding it. Conversely, after the program a much higher proportion were employed seventy percent of the time or more. Participants maintained their employment longer than they did before their involvement in the program and were more likely to be working in full time jobs. If they left employment it was more often because they quit rather than were fired.

A large majority of participants believed their employability skills had been enhanced. This is illustrated in Summary Exhibit 1b. The diagram shows the four barriers to employment most often mentioned in the course of the evaluation. For each of these it shows the proportion of Futures participants questioned who identified it as a barrier and the proportion of those affected in this way who reported that Futures had helped them to overcome the barrier.

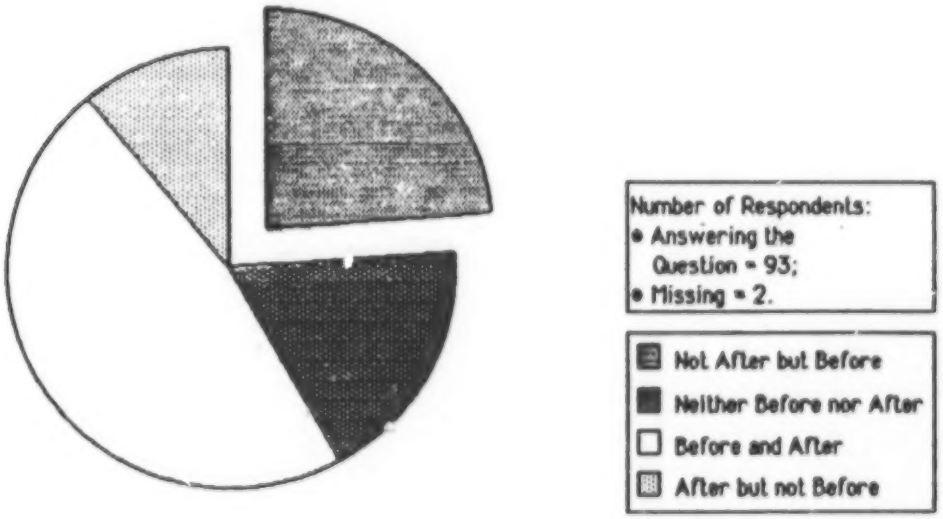
A significant minority of graduates, including about one quarter of those who had been receiving social allowance before taking the program, moved from actual or impending dependence on social allowance to participation in the wage economy. Summary Exhibit 1c shows this group who left social allowance following Futures as an "exploded" wedge. A smaller group reported starting to receive social allowance following Futures. Less than half the participants reported receiving social allowance both before and after. While the exact proportions may differ due to under reporting during the telephone interviews, evidence exists to suggest that the relative sizes of the four social allowance utilization groups shown in the diagram are correct.

Participants generally felt they were better off financially six months after completing the program than before starting it. As illustrated in Summary exhibit 1d, this was especially true for the two groups employed the largest proportion of the time following Futures. Naturally, very few of those not gaining employment following Futures felt this way.

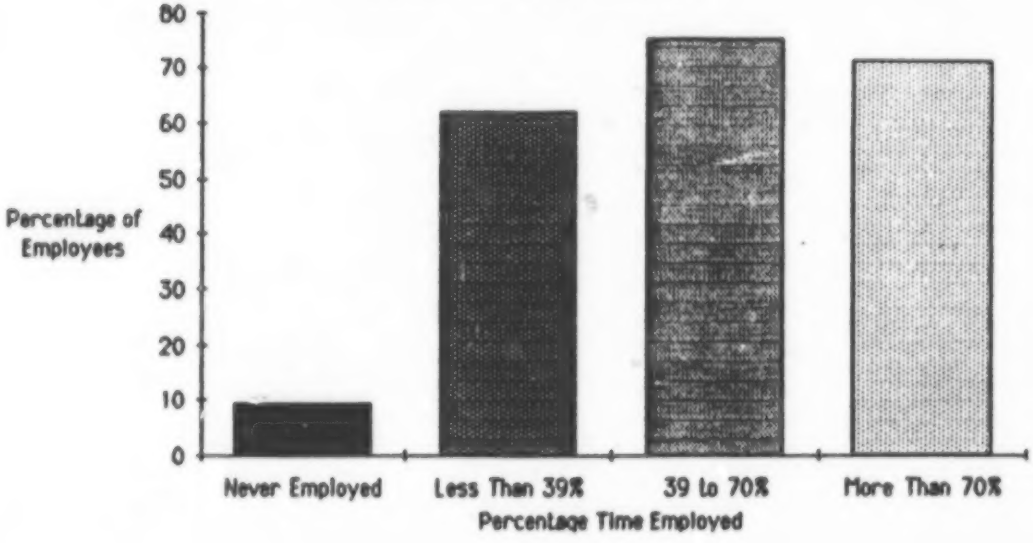
SUMMARY EXHIBIT 1b: FUTURES HELPS PARTICIPANTS OVERCOME EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS



SUMMARY EHHIBIT 1c: USE OF SOCIAL ALLOWANCE BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS


Number of Respondents:
• Answering the Question = 93;
• Missing = 2.
Not After but Before
Neither Before nor After
Before and After
After but not Before

SUMMARY EXHIBIT 1d: FUTURES PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVE THEMSELVES TO BE FINANCIALLY BETTER OFF



Based on observation and interviews at the program's headquarters, it is our judgement that the success of the program is dependent on the high quality of the staff and their broad, relevant experience. The key resource for the program is its staff, a manager and assistant manager, two assistants, and office staff shared with other programs of the Columbia Institute of Canada. The success of Futures, like any other employment program, is dependent on the organization and skills of the people delivering it. They must be able to assist participants make the transition from unemployment and dependence on social allowance to independence in the workforce. Key among the requirements that the program sets for it staff is a high level of motivation and desire to be involved with the clientele. A positive and caring attitude is essential for ensuring that program participants have a rewarding and beneficial experience with Futures. Other equally important qualifications include an instructing background, experience in business and the hiring process, and familiarity with the full array of social services available to participants so that effective referrals are possible. While the educational background of staff is important, a degree is not necessary. The staff interviewed demonstrated all these characteristics and the sessions observed indicated the importance of these people to making the program work.

Participants did not distinguish very strongly between program elements, making it difficult to isolate the impact of individual elements on the above successes. Nevertheless, some influences are clear. Job Search Training and Practice as well as workshops on Job Maintenance and Life Skills all had major impacts. Conversely, the use of government wage subsidies involves very few participants and is no longer a key element in the program. The relationships among the various program elements and the outcomes and effects of the program are discussed further in Summary Exhibit 2.

Program Description

This profile of the Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada is based on an Evaluation Assessment of the Futures Program conducted by the Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group for the Employability Resources Network in 1989. It is summarized in the attached Logic Model, Summary Exhibit 3.

CLIENTELE

The target population is employment disadvantaged men and women in Calgary. Referrals are accepted from a variety of social service agencies including Alberta Family and Social Services offices, municipal or private social service agencies, church groups, the YMCA, and self-referrals in response to newspaper advertisements, flyers and other marketing efforts. The only criteria that potential participants have to meet is that they are social assistance

Summary Exhibit 2: What Works For Whom

Futures Project of the Columbia Institute of Canada.

Clientele: Severely Employment Disadvantaged.

Intervention	Intended Output	Output (Outcome of Intervention)	Impact (Leads to)	Effect (Result)	Comments
Job Search Training	To increase ability to identify, approach, and obtain a job from employers.	Improvements to: - resume writing; - interview skills; - letter writing; - application form completion; - employer identification.	Improved presentation of self, and improved selection of potential employment position, Leads to:	Increased % of participants obtaining jobs; some participants no longer dependent on social allowance; participants perceive better financial position.	Resume writing, completing a job application, and being interviewed for a job were among the 4 most frequently identified barriers to employment.

Summary Exhibit 2: What Works For Whom (cont'd)

Intervention	Intended Output	Output (Outcome of Intervention)	Impact (Leads to)	Effect (Result)	Comments
What Works For WhomJob Search Practice	Potential employers identified/ contacted and interviews completed.	Increased experience calling/ writing to employers, being interviewed, and completing application forms. Some participants obtain jobs.	Experience leads to increased self-confidence and improved subsequent performance.	Increased % of participants obtain a job.	
Job Maintenance Training	Increased understanding of employer expectations, social situation of the workplace.	Improved understanding of employer requirements re dress, punctuality, supervision, responsibility. Increased realism about what a job will require and offer.	Participants make fewer mistakes, and Experience fewer disappointments.	More participants stay in first or second job. Job changers quit rather than being fired.	"Confidence in ability to work" and "Working with the same amount of supervision as everyone else at work" were skills which were seen as enhanced by 3/4 of participants.

Summary Exhibit 2: What Works For Whom (cont'd)

Intervention	Intended Output	Output (Outcome of Intervention)	Impact (Leads to)	Effect (Result)	Comments
Life Skills Training	Ability to deal with family/ social pressures that impinge on work enhanced.	Improved ability to deal with family matters, get along with others, take of health matters.	Improved overall self confidence and ability to interact.	Increased % obtain a job, keep it longer.	"Family matters" was the 2nd most frequently mentioned barrier to employment.
Vocational Counselling	Participant initiated coaching to deal with interview or workplace challenges.	Over 90% completed the program. Large proportion successful at finding/ keeping a job.	Frustrations, problems mediated as experience grows so early failure is avoided.	Increased length of time in a job, increased income from employment, and reduced social allowance dependence.	Personal counselling handled by referring the participant.
Follow up Counselling	Not a formal part of the program.	Refreshers and support for individuals experiencing difficulty beyond the end of the program.	Helps individuals over "rough patches".	Increased proportion of time spent working.	Not funded as part of the program. Would be a valuable addition to provide "long term" (6 month) followup.

recipients, UI exhaustees or Natives receiving federal social assistance. Futures is intended to be a program for those without the qualifications for other programs and is seen as such by workers in referring agencies.

OPERATION

The Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada has one key goal, "to assist individuals classified as employable social assistance recipients in achieving employment."

This Program is two weeks in duration, with follow-up three weeks after graduation. It is designed to assist participants in overcoming barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. Program staff seek to accomplish this by teaching participants practical employment gaining skills, increasing their self-esteem and giving them confidence in their own skills and abilities. The educational activities pursued include:

Assessment of Clients (Pre- and Post-Program)

Individual participant assessments are conducted by staff. Results are recorded and discussed with each participant privately. Assessment information is used by staff throughout the two week program when discussing potential jobs with participants.

Skills Training

This phase involves the conduct of instructional workshops in three general areas: personal development, employment development and job success. The topics covered include: barriers to employment; myths and realities of employment; skills identification; employers expectations; preparation of resumes, cover letters, thank you letters; interviewing skills; and application forms.

Instructors encourage active participation by all clients throughout the program. Group exercises are used on a regular basis in order to help participants overcome the sense of isolation that they may have experienced while on social assistance. The group exercises are also designed to teach participants to work cooperatively and build social interaction skills. Staff constantly strive to maintain a non-threatening environment so that participants feel free to express themselves and can gain a sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Job Search

The job search activity takes place during week two, after participants have received training in life skills, job-getting/keeping skills. Participants are first required to identify three potential job opportunities listed in the local newspapers or identify potential employers who could be contacted for a job in their area of vocational interest in

Summary Exhibit 2: What Works For Whom (cont'd)

Intervention	Intended Output	Output (Outcome of Intervention)	Impact (Leads to)	Effect (Result)	Comments
Subsidy/Support Matching	To mobilize EAP funding to employers in support of participants.	Very few participants employ it.	Gets participant a first job experience.		Not seen by program staff as particularly valuable. Key objective is to bring participants into the competitive labour market. Has been used in other programs to get initial work experience on resumes of the young or disabled.

the Yellow Pages of the Calgary Telephone Directory.

When participants have identified a number of possible employers, they prepare a cue card for what they want to say when they call the employer. Telephones are available in privacy for these calls. Participants make their calls to set up job interviews for that week. Staff are available for advice and assistance as required. Participants who are successful in their first job interview move on to work. The others return to Futures and discuss what happened during the interview with staff. Then they proceed to try again.

Counselling

Counselling is provided by all staff to program participants as required. The Program Manager generally assumes responsibility for the more serious "crisis" counselling, however participants can approach any staff member they choose. The counselling provided is strictly job related and referrals will be made by staff when assistance is required in other areas.

Formal Follow-Up

Futures staff contact program participants by telephone approximately three weeks after their graduation. This time span can vary, depending on the ability of staff to reach all graduates. The purpose of this follow-up activity is to obtain statistical information on participant status (e.g., employed, school, further training, or other). At the same time, staff will also provide any advice or assistance if the participant requires it.

APPROACH

The Futures Program generally follows a "learner-directed" model of education. Responsibility is placed on participants to take advantage of the opportunities being offered by the program, to actively participate in group activities, share their own experiences and try to benefit and learn from those of other participants.

The skills and abilities of program staff are focused on fostering a supportive, caring and instructional environment, while instilling confidence in participants and encouraging them to "take charge" of their own lives.

Issues and Findings

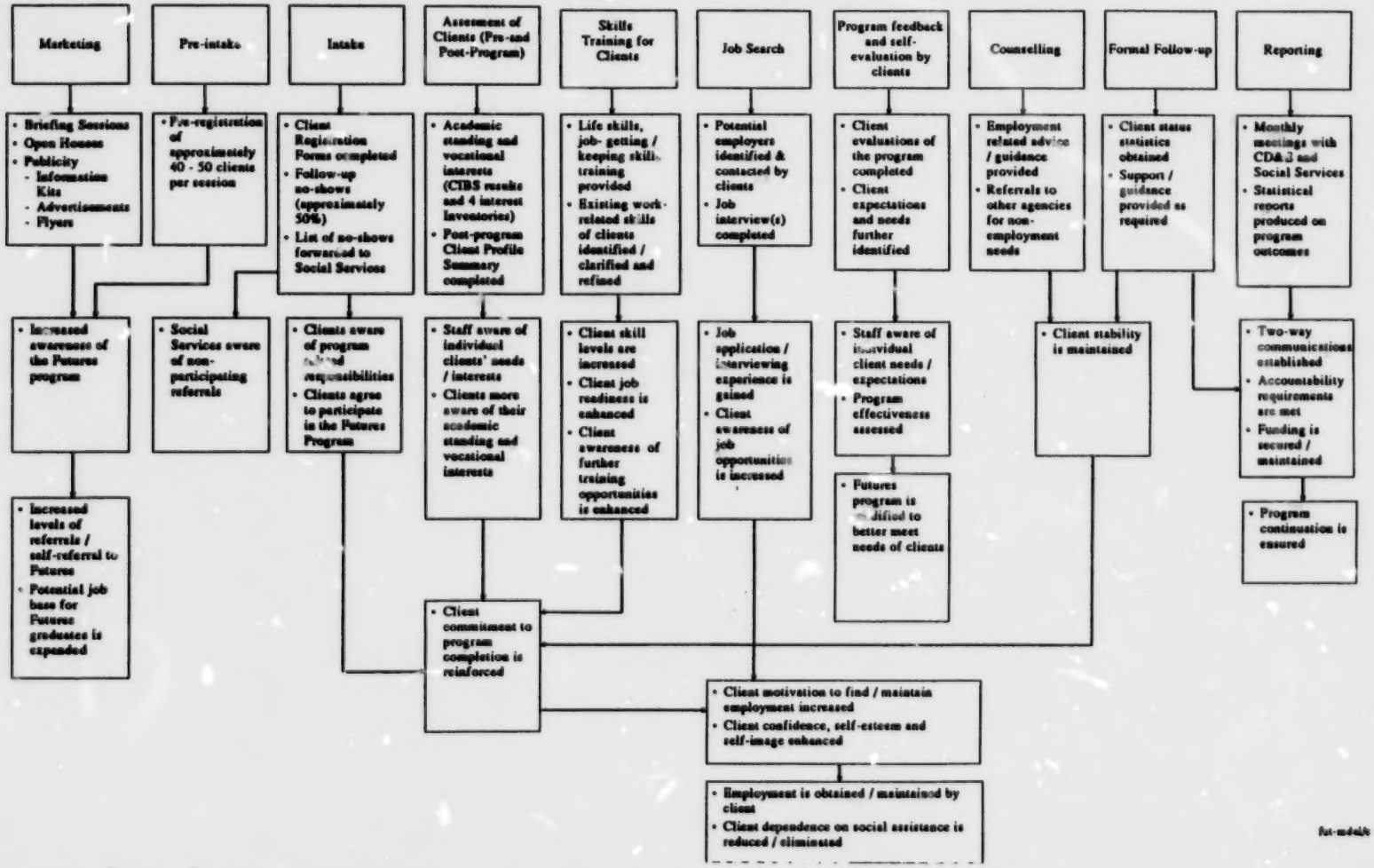
Six issues were examined in evaluating the Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada. They are listed, along with the conclusions suggested by the data used, in the Summary Exhibit following.

1. While the program enhanced participants employability, as stated above, it was more likely to improve the employment situation of sole support parents (making up 49% of the participant base) than other participants.

SUMMARY — EXHIBIT 3: COLUMBIA FUTURES — PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

GOALS

To assist individuals classified as employable social assistance recipients in achieving employment


Activities
Outputs
Impacts & Effects
Marketing
Pre-intake
Intake
Assessment of Clients (Pre-and Post-Program)
Skills Training for Clients
Job Search
Program feedback and self-evaluation by clients
Counselling
Formal Follow-up
Reporting
• Briefing Sessions
• Open Houses
• Publicity
- Information Kits
- Advertisements
- Flyers
• Pre-registration of approximately 40 - 50 clients per session
• Client Registration Forms completed
• Follow-up no-shows (approximately 50%)
• List of no-shows forwarded to Social Services
• Academic standing and vocational interests (CIBS results and 4 interest inventories)
• Post-program Client Profile Summary completed
• Life skills, job- getting / keeping skills training provided
• Existing work-related skills of clients identified / clarified and refined
• Potential employers identified & contacted by clients
• Job interview(s) completed
• Client evaluations of the program completed
• Client expectations and needs further identified
• Employment related advice / guidance provided
• Referrals to other agencies for non-employment needs
• Client status statistics obtained
• Support / guidance provided as required
• Monthly meetings with CD&T and Social Services
• Statistical reports produced on program outcomes
• Increased awareness of the Futures program
• Social Services aware of non-participating referrals
• Clients aware of program related responsibilities
• Clients agree to participate in the Futures Program
• Staff aware of individual clients' needs / interests
• Clients more aware of their academic standing and vocational interests
• Client skill levels are increased
• Client job readiness is enhanced
• Client awareness of further training opportunities is enhanced
• Job application / interviewing experience is gained
• Client awareness of job opportunities is increased
• Staff aware of individual client needs / expectations
• Program effectiveness assessed
• Client stability is maintained
• Two-way communications established
• Accountability requirements are met
• Funding is secured / maintained
• Increased levels of referrals / self-referral to Futures
• Potential job base for Futures graduates is expanded
• Futures program is modified to better meet needs of clients
• Program continuation is ensured
• Client commitment to program completion is reinforced
• Client motivation to find / maintain employment increased
• Client confidence, self-esteem and self-image enhanced
• Employment is obtained / maintained by client
• Client dependence on social assistance is reduced / eliminated

fut-mdl4b

2. The program had little impact on average social allowance costs but seems likely to have ended the dependence of some participants on social allowance.

3. The program was successful in enhancing employment readiness through its reduction of the primary barriers to employability perceived by participants: the ability to take care of family matters and job finding skills (writing a resume, completing a job application and being interviewed for a job). Job keeping skills were less likely to be seen as barriers to employability.

4. Many participants felt that they were financially better off following the program and this was strongly related to their success in obtaining and maintaining employment. However, there was no strong relationship evident between changes in income reported by participants and their views on their financial situation. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the program improved participants' financial situation.

5. The cost of the Futures program is likely paid back in between 11 and 18 months from reduced social assistance payments to program participants.

6. The program components were generally regarded by the participants as making a positive contribution to increasing employability. No particular program component was singled out as being especially effective, which may reflect the short duration of the program and the possibility that individual program components were not clearly distinguished by the participants, especially in retrospect.

Our final conclusion, is that the Futures program has evolved away from a dependence on social worker referrals for its clients, since only 49% of participants had been referred to the program by a social worker. It appears that the program is standing alone as a resource that is valued among the community of social assistance recipients in Calgary who wish to enhance their employability.

Recommendations

Against these conclusions, we recommend:

1. Referrals from social agencies continue but if there are possibilities for further expanding the outreach of the program to the Calgary community they should be explored. (See discussion)

2. In delivering the program, Futures staff should consider whether opportunities may exist to identify, during the two week course, those individuals, for example the young or handicapped, who may most benefit from job placement under the Employment Assistance Program (EAP) . (See Issues 1 and 3)

Summary Exhibit 4: Evaluation Issues Conclusions

	Issues	Conclusions Suggested by the Evaluation
1.	Did the Program assist the participants in obtaining employment; or maintaining employment?	Yes, for 76%
2.	Did the Program end or reduce the assistance?	Yes, likely for between 6 and 23% of participants
3.	Did the Program strengthen the participants personal sense of employment readiness?	Yes
4.	Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation?	Uncertain, reported income declined, perceived financial status improved
5.	What were the costs of the program compared to social assistance?	11-18 months social assistance savings equal program costs under reasonable assumptions
6.	What interventions contribute most to increasing employability?	All components perceived as helpful but none identified as most helpful

3. The program should consider enhancing its processes for referring clients to other agencies, including other programs offered by The Columbia Institute of Canada, if they express a need for some educational upgrading, especially if they intend to seek further job related, job specific training elsewhere. (See Issue 3)

4. The program should explore further with referral agencies the specific reasons why native Canadians and single people exhibit greater difficulty in their employment situation. (See Issue 1)

5. The program should continue to ensure that job finding skills development continues as a key aspect of operations. (See Issue 3)

6. Program officials should ensure that aspects of the program which assist single parents in making family arrangements continue. (See Issue 3)

1.
INTRODUCTION

The Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada, Calgary, Alberta, is a voluntary two week "employment readiness" program, which has been evaluated under the auspices of the Employability Resources Network (ERN) Initiative. This report, prepared by the Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group which also conducted the evaluation, assessment presents the results of the evaluation study of the Futures Program.

Purpose of the Study

An Evaluation Assessment of the Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada was completed in May, 1989.

Consistent with the Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group (CLCG) and ERN approach to carrying out evaluation activities, this assessment provided the basis for the evaluation study which was conducted between September and November, 1989.

Evaluation Objectives

Pursuant to the Evaluation Assessment and a decision by the ERN Evaluation Steering Committee, the issues that were addressed in the evaluation study (together with anticipated quality of data) are contained in Exhibit 1 below.

Structure of the Report

This report is structured in the following manner:

- **Background**
  - Mission statement, objectives and benefits of ERN initiative.
  - Futures Program objectives and a brief description of Futures Program operations/activities.
- **Study Design**
  - Describes how the data for the evaluation study research were collected and analyzed.
- **Facts, Findings and Conclusions**
  - Outlines for each evaluation issue and research question the salient facts, findings and conclusions eached.
- **Recommendations**
  - Outlines the recommendations arising from our facts, findings and conclusions.

- **Conclusion**

    - Provides an overall conclusion to the study.

A Technical Appendix supplies the survey questionnaire, statistical tables and other technical material relating to this evaluation.

Acknowledgements

We wish to repeat the thanks extended in the Evaluation Assessment report to the staff of the Futures Program, in particular, Mr. Tom Snell, Manager of Operations, Columbia Institute of Canada. We also wish to acknowledge the support and input from Dr. Bill Wong from Alberta Career Development and Employment and Mr. Rudy Hoehn of Alberta Social Services. Finally, we would extend our thanks to the respondents of the telephone survey whose forbearance significantly helped to raise the quality of data obtained.

2.
BACKGROUND

Mission Statement of Employability Resources Network (ERN)

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) was undertaken to identify and promote effective ways of helping employment disadvantaged persons return to active participation in the labour market.

Objectives of ERN

The objectives of ERN are the following:

- To determine, through a comprehensive evaluation of a variety of initiatives, what approaches to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers, work best for whom.

- To demonstrate and test, using financial and technical assistance, approaches that are vital to enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.

- To develop and maintain a central information clearinghouse of employability enhancement techniques and materials. Contained in the clearinghouse are descriptions of Canadian and international projects and programs, contact people, evaluations and bibliographies.

- To synthesize recent experience and recommend to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (funder) and other governments, effective approaches for enhancing the employability of disadvantaged workers.

Benefits of ERN

ERN has been designed to provide a "return" in the form of information and assistance to key stakeholders. They include Employment and Immigration Canada, other labour market or social service departments, projects being evaluated and demonstration projects, as well as communities, groups and individuals working or interested in the training and human resource development areas.

- Projects being evaluated will benefit from the objective examination of their services and outcomes for participants. Where appropriate,

suggestions for alternate approaches or changes will be made.

- Senior governments will receive a synthesis of findings from evaluations, literature review and contacts with the employment community that will help in policy formulation and program development.

- Interested parties will also have access to a national clearinghouse of information on employment projects, programs, contact persons, and evaluations that will help in preparing funding submissions and in improving the quality of their services.

- Selected demonstration projects will be assisted to test innovative approaches.

Overview of Columbia Futures Program - Operations and Activities

The Columbia Institute of Canada (CIC) also known as the Columbia Training Centre (CTC), is a private organization designed to respond to both the education and the training and development needs of industry, the government, labour and individual members of the community. In order to meet its goals, CIC has developed a number of innovative programs including the "Futures Program".

The Futures Program of the Columbia Institute of Canada has one key goal, which is **"to assist individuals classified as employable social assistance recipients in achieving employment."**

The target population is employment disadvantaged men and women in Calgary. The program is designed to assist them in overcoming barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. The program seeks to accomplish this by teaching them practical employment gaining skills, increasing their self-esteem and giving them confidence in their own skills and abilities.

In order to meet its overall goal, the Futures Program has developed a number of objectives. They are:

- To obtain lists of possible clients and employers from Alberta Social Services and Career Development and Employment (CD&E);

- To register, orient, assess and deal with each client in a dignified, respectful, fair and supportive manner;

- To provide a wide variety of personal employment development, and employment success modules designed to assist clients in achieving and maintaining employment;

- To provide a supportive job finding environment where clients will select a position of interest, discuss with staff if necessary, and be aided in making that job selection an employment reality;

- To provide an extensive support environment for clients who need to have additional time and energy focused on their unique situations (e.g., through counselling, referrals to other appropriate agencies and services in the community); and

- To gather information through observation, assessment and follow-up that will assist in developing better systems in the future.

The Futures Program evolved in mid-1987 and consisted originally of three key activities undertaken over a two week period:

- Orientation and Assessment - entailing a general briefing about the program, as well as completion of a series of proficiency and interest assessment tests;

- Employment Readiness Skills Training - instructional workshops designed to provide practical skills essential for finding and keeping a job; and

- Job Matching - wherein participants had the opportunity to be matched with jobs available under the Employment Assistance Program (EAP). (This activity was altered as the Futures Program evolved; an explanation is provided later.)

A follow-up activity was initiated by staff three to four weeks after participants graduated from the program. The purpose of the follow-up was to gather information on participant activities at that time (e.g., whether they were employed, enroled in further training or school), as well as to provide additional support, information or counselling, if required.

The Futures Program was experimental in nature and adjustments were made on an ongoing basis. Two key factors affected the evolution of the program. The first one involved the lapse of EAP from January to March 1988 due to a lack of funding until the new fiscal year. The Futures Program continued during this time, but the "Job Matching" component was altered with the consent of CD & E, and participants were encouraged to expand their job seeking activities beyond the EAP, using the job search skills they were being taught in the program (e.g., consult newspaper ads or the yellow pages for potential employers). As a result, Futures was no longer strictly a "front-end" program for the EAP. The "job matching" activity was altered, with more of the onus being placed on the participant to identify and pursue employment opportunities, while staff would provide assistance, as required.

The second factor that affected Futures revolved around the role of Alberta Social Services to provide all program referrals. For a variety of reasons (e.g., ongoing reorganization of Alberta Social Services, heavy caseloads for social workers) the level of referrals being made by social workers dropped significantly in late 1988 and Futures had to assume a more active role in

recruiting and enroling program participants.

As a result, the Futures Program was opened up to a wider range of potential participants, accepting referrals from a variety of social service agencies (e.g., provincial, municipal, or private social service agencies, church groups, the YMCA), as well as self-referrals in response to newspaper advertisements, flyers and other marketing efforts. The only criteria that potential participants had to meet were that they were social assistance recipients, UI exhaustees or Natives receiving federal social assistance.

Today the Futures Program continues to be two weeks in duration, with follow-up three weeks after graduation. Its doors are open to a wide variety of people, with diverse needs and abilities. Very few are refused entry to the program, as long as they meet the above noted criteria, and participation has been terminated for only a few people whose abuse of drugs and/or alcohol impacted program operations. In the Calgary area, several other programs operate with similar objectives. In general, they are seen by referring social workers as more restrictive in who they will accept based on education, experience, age or other relevant criteria. Futures, on the other hand, is seen as, and is intended to be, a program for those without the qualifications for other programs.

The Futures Program generally follows a "learner-directed" model of education. Responsibility is placed on participants to take advantage of the opportunities being offered by the program, to actively participate in group activities, share their own experiences and try to benefit and learn from those of other participants. The skills and abilities of program staff are focused on fostering a supportive, caring and instructional environment, while instilling confidence in participants and encouraging them to "take charge" of their own lives.

3.
STUDY DESIGN

The study design focused on a multiple lines of evidence approach which involved the following methods for collecting data:

- telephone survey of participants;
- aggregate data collected from government sources; and
- Futures program registration data.

An examination of Statistics Canada baseline data on unemployment in Calgary was planned but not funded.

Participant Survey

The issues selected for evaluation were not directly addressed by data held in the Futures Program. Since the major source of information for the issues had to be the participants themselves, a survey of previous participants was used to collect the information.

The program runs for a short period and has been in operation for some time so the number of previous participants that could have been eligible for inclusion in the survey was large. However, since the objective was to understand how the program operated in the recent past, the "sampling strategy" decided upon was to contact as many participants as possible from a single period in the program's life. Participants from all sessions of the program beginning in the period from September 1988 through February 1989 were eligible for interviews. This allowed at least a six month period from program completion to interview in the fall of 1989 so that longer term results of the program could be assessed. The interviewers were instructed to call back at least five times and to trace any telephone numbers that were no longer correct as shown in program records. Of 285 eligible graduates of the program, 95 were contacted and consented to a telephone interview.

The questionnaire, shown in Appendix I, is largely made up of standard questions developed for the ERN evaluations.

The data from the questionnaire were complemented by eight data elements on each respondent extracted from the Futures files. They included the following:

- length of social assistance before the program;
- number of interviews attended in the last month before the program;

- reason for not working before the program;
- highest level of education attained;
- last grade completed;
- last year attended school;
- time employed before the program; and
- wage at last job before the program.

Aggregate Data

We approached two Alberta government departments, Alberta Social Services and CD&E, and one federal government department, EIC, for information to assist with this evaluation study. The information requested was aggregate data on subsets of the 95 participants with a minimum of ten individuals in each subset. This involved primarily the means for each subset on items such as the amount of social assistance received in a period of time or the number of weeks worked in a six month period. Both Alberta departments agreed to assist us and, one has supplied data. The federal government department did not assist in the study due to confidentiality concerns.

Measuring Program "Success"

In the data analysis used to assess the evaluation issues, a key definition was what constituted a success for the program from the point of view of the evaluation. The program has its own perfectly valid measure of success (% employed three weeks after leaving the program). However, for the purposes of this evaluation, we developed a more comprehensive measure of success.

ERN investigations require a detailed analysis of individuals' employability: It is not enough to know whether participants were employed after participating in the Futures program. Factors such as how long participants were employed need also to be investigated.

We wanted to capture the idea that individual participants represented different degrees of success for the program. The success definition used in this study had to be consistent with the program's definition, however. It is important to note that, consistent with the approach followed by the Futures program, we did not attempt to assess the success of the individual participants. Rather, we attempted to assess the success of the program by examining the subsequent experience of the participants.

The definition we chose was based on percentage of time employed after completing Futures. We began with a

statistically useful, though arbitrary development of the definition, dividing the participants into four equal groupings according to how large a percentage of the time since completing the Futures program they had worked. We refined this working definition by including in the lowest group only those who had not worked at all and in the highest group only those who had worked more than seventy percent of the time. The middle two groupings were separated by the median or middle score for the whole sample of participants. This four category measure of program success forms the basis for much of the analysis that follows. These categories are:

- participants who did not find any employment;
- participants who were employed but less than 39% of the time after program participation (the median);
- participants employed between 39% and 70% of the time after program participation; and
- participants employed over 70% of the time after program participation.

Exhibit 1

Issues	Expected Quality of Data
1. Did project assist participants in obtaining/ maintaining employment?	Low/Medium
2. Did project end/reduce participants' dependence on Social Assistance?	High*
3. Did project strengthen the participants' sense of employment readiness?	Low
4. Did project improve the participants' financial situation?	Low
5. What were the costs of the program compared to Social Assistance?	High*
6. What interventions contribute most to creating employment?	Low

* It was anticipated in the evaluation assessment that there was a higher level of risk of not obtaining sufficient data for Issues 2 and 5 than for the others.

More explicit details concerning the foregoing issues with accompanying research questions, indicators and data sources are contained in Appendix III to this report.

4.
FACTS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section of the report we present the findings of our research on the six issues associated with the evaluation study of the Futures Program.

Issue 1:

Did the Program assist the participants in:

- **obtaining employment**
- **maintaining employment?**

CONCLUSION

The Futures program improved participants' ability to obtain and maintain employment. Participants maintained their employment longer than they did before their involvement in the program and were more likely to be working in full time jobs. If they left employment it was more often because they quit rather than were fired.

In comparison to the majority of participants the program had an above average impact in improving the employment situation of sole support parents (making up 49% of the participant base). However, the program had less impact on enhancing the employment circumstances of individuals who were single and those who came from referral agencies serving native Canadians.

ISSUE FOCUS

This issue covers one of the primary concerns of all employability enhancement programs: whether the training provided improves a participant's employment potential as exhibited by a better employment history.

In researching this issue we used the following data sources:

- a telephone survey of participants; and
- registration data from Futures project files;

As noted in Exhibit 1 above, these sources were expected to yield low to medium quality data for addressing this issue. This expectation was based on the self-reporting nature of the survey instrument, the long period of time that would have passed since program participation and the relative simplicity of the information required.

These data sources were used to investigate the following research questions associated with the issue:

- How many participants subsequently found work?
- How many successful participants maintained employment?
- Is there a change in employment pattern for successful participants?
- Is the program success rate higher than in a comparable group?

FINDINGS

How many participants subsequently found work?

In researching this question, we employed the four categories of employment success identified in Section 3. Exhibit 2 identifies the results for participants' before and after their involvement in the program.

We found that seventy-five percent of participants subsequently found work six months after the program.

In comparison, the target for success established by the program in discussion with its funding agencies was 15% employment after three weeks.

We compared these results with those for participants before the program. Technically all participants were unemployed immediately before the program. This is because only social assistance recipients, those who had exhausted their UI benefits; and/or recipients of federal assistance from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, were eligible for entry to the program. Program registration records, however, indicated that approximately 38% of participants had been employed at some point in their lives prior to their involvement in the program. Therefore, approximately double the number of survey respondents were employed at some point after the program, compared to before.

The completion rate for the program was 91%.

How many successful participants maintained employment?

The mean number of jobs held by participants was 1.5, which suggests that participants tended to continue in the first or second job they landed after leaving the Futures program. Very few participants (7%) took three or more jobs.

In the six months after the program the proportion of participants who remained unemployed was 40% less than what it had been before the program.

A primary finding from Exhibit 2 is that nearly twice the proportion of participants were employed 39% or more of the six months after Futures as were employed the same amount of time before the program.

Exhibit 2

Criteria of Success

	Six months before (n=88)	Six months after (n=92)
No employment	63	25
Employed 38% of the time or less	9	25
Employed between 39% and 70% of the time	21	27
Employed over 71% of the time	8	23
Total	100%	100%

Exhibit 3 further analyzes the issue whether participants maintained employment by looking at the mean number of weeks participants held their first job after leaving the Futures program.

Exhibit 3

Criteria of Success

	Mean No. of weeks
No employment	n.a.
Employed 38% of the time or less	5
Employed between 39% and 70% of the time	16 (n=25)
Employed over 71% of the time	32 (n=21)

The mean number of weeks increases through each success category which, again, suggests that participants were maintaining the first job they obtained after Columbia.

Throughout the analysis of the results for this evaluation study we were able to assess the differences between the categories of success in terms of a wide variety of different variables, such as income, social assistance history etc. The purpose was to research in greater depth the circumstances of participants employability.

We obtained the following findings:

- A higher percentage of aboriginal participants, 43% (n=14) compared to non-aboriginal (22%, n=78) remained unemployed;

- Approximately 20% more aboriginal participants were located in the bottom two categories of employment success, as compared to non-aboriginal participants;

- There were over twice as many single people in the program compared to those who were married;

- A larger percentage of married people tended to fall within the top two categories of employment success. 61% of married participants were employed 39% of the time or more compared to 45% for single participants;

- Sole support parents were more likely to maintain employment, since 58% of them compared to 44% for non-sole support parents were employed 39% of the time or more;

- The mean grade level achieved by participants was 10. There did not appear to be any noticeable relationship between the level of schooling achieved by participants and the percentage of the time worked after the Futures program.

Is there a change in employment pattern for successful participants?

In this research question we examine whether any changes, for better or worse, occurred in the nature or pattern of the employment obtained by participants as a result of their participation in the program.

For example, fifty-five percent of participants who had been employed at some time before the program were engaged in full time work.
By contrast, a larger percentage of participants (72%) were engaged in full time work after the program.

Exhibit 4 outlines the reasons given for leaving the last job held before participation in Columbia and the reasons given for the leaving the first job held after the program.

The exhibit indicates that about twice the percentage of participants quit

employment after the program compared to before. In the period after their involvement in the Futures program, the single most important reason for leaving employment related to the decision to voluntarily quit.

Before the program other reasons such as being laid off, temporary employment and health/accident were equally important as quitting as a reason for ending a job. Therefore, the survey and registration data from the program revealed that every few individuals reported they had been fired from previous jobs.

Exhibit 4

Reason For Leaving a Job	Last Job Held Before Futures % (n=83)	First Job Held After Futures % (n=42)
Quit	21	41
Laid off	18	17
Temporary Employment	12	21
Health/Accident	16	2

Issue 2

Did the Program End/Reduce the Participants' Dependence on Social Assistance?

CONCLUSION

There is no reduction in the number of participants using Social Allowance following Futures nor is there a substantial reduction in the average amount they receive. However, some individuals receiving or about to begin receiving Social Allowance before Futures are no longer dependent on Social Allowance after taking Futures.

ISSUE FOCUS

A desired effect of an employability enhancement program like Futures with a client base of social assistance recipients is to give these people an ability to enter the workforce and ultimately overcome their dependence on assistance. This issue focuses on assessing the effect of the program on

either ending or reducing clients' dependence on social assistance.

In analyzing this Issue we investigated the following research questions:

- Did participants receive less social assistance after the program then before/during the program?
- Level of assistance received by a comparable population?

Two sources of data were used to evaluate this issue. One source was aggregate data on Futures participants provided by Alberta Family and Social Services in 1990. The other was the survey of participants conducted as part of this study. The two sources reported on the same group of Futures participants.

Both sources have limitations but we judged the Departmental data to be more accurate than the survey data. The survey asked participants to remember events and income figures stretching back as much as a year and a half, whereas the government data recorded these events as they occurred. The survey, however, allowed us to examine individuals rather than groups and provided a much broader range of information. It also provided data comparable to that used in other ERN evaluations. The two sources provided data that were consistent in some respects and inconsistent in others. Here we present our findings about the issue and examine the message conveyed by the inconsistencies.

FINDINGS

Did participants receive less social assistance after the program than before/during the program?

In our analysis we addressed changes in participants' dependence on social assistance by comparing the following two concerns:

- whether participants ended dependence (i.e., the numbers on assistance dropped); and
- whether participants reduced dependence (i.e., assistance income dropped).

The Alberta Family and Social Services data show that, for 92 participants in Futures, 65 (71%) had been receiving social allowance in the six months preceding their participation. Their average monthly income from Social Allowance was $719. In the 6 months following participation, 66 (72%) participants received social allowance payments according to this source. Their average monthly income from social allowance was $706 in this period.

Note that these figures are based on aggregate data. Potentially 26 individuals could have ended their receipt of social allowance while a further 27, who had been supporting themselves with other income source, i.e. Unemployment Insurance, could have moved on to social allowance. Further, the difference in average monthly payments could be

accounted for by individuals with lower levels of entitlement (i.e. fewer dependents) starting to receive social allowance. We further examine these possibilities below under issue 5.

The survey data show a pattern that differs in important ways while remaining consistent with the aggregate data in other respects. We found that 71% of survey respondents reported receiving social assistance in the six months before participation compared to 59% in the six months after. This represents a net decrease of 12 (from 66 to 54) individuals who reported receipt of social assistance.

However, the reported social assistance income of individuals was not reduced following individuals' participation in the program. The mean amount of assistance reported received before was $668.50 per month compared to $649.00 after, which represented a marginal decrease of about $11.

In our survey analysis we investigated in greater detail the two concerns raised above by tracking the social assistance history of each individual who participated in the program.

We found that 44 participants who reported receiving social allowance before program participation also reported receiving it in the six months afterwards. The mean amount reported received by 40 participants was only about $44 less per month in the six months after the program than before. This tends to confirm the view, outlined above, that the program did not have an appreciable effect in terms of reducing dependence on social assistance.

Twenty-two participants who had reported receiving assistance before the program did not report receiving it in the six months after the program. These participants appeared, therefore, to have ended their dependence on social assistance.

Of the 22, 19 reported the amounts of social assistance they received. The mean income received six months before the program was $581 per month. This was about $77 per month less than the group of 40 participants who maintained their dependence on social assistance.

Conversely, we determined that 10 of the 29 individuals who did not report receiving assistance before the program went on social assistance afterwards. They received approximately $100 less in assistance per month than the group of 40 individuals who maintained their pattern of dependence on assistance. .

All these patterns are broadly consistent with the aggregate data obtained except that the government data show a higher number of participants receiving social allowance following the program.

A pattern of interest emerges when the two sets of data are examined as broken down by category of reported post program employment. Under reporting of receipt of social allowance occurs primarily in one group of participants. Those who report being employed for

the highest proportion of the time fail to report receipt of social allowance payments 40 to 50 percent of the time. For this group who report success at gaining employment, social allowance may carry a stigma sufficiently negative to inhibit reporting its use, even to a stranger over the telephone.

Issue 3

Did the Program Strengthen the Participants' Personal Sense of Employment Readiness?

CONCLUSION

Overall, participants' personal sense of employment readiness improved following the program.

The program was successful in enhancing employment readiness through its reduction of the primary barriers to employability perceived by participants: the ability to take care of family matters and job finding skills (writing a resume, completing a job application and being interviewed for a job). Job keeping skills were less likely to be seen as barriers to employability.

Participants, regarded their educational levels and job experience as important barriers to their ability to find or keep a job. This can be explained by the fact that those involved in the program were social assistance recipients who had been out of the job market for some time and had not on average attained a grade level higher than 10.

The program did not address these two generic skills and it is probably for this reason that participants rated these skills as among the least improved.

ISSUE FOCUS

Social assistance recipients face a variety of impediments or barriers which severely limit their ability to be employable. One of the primary concerns of any employment enhancement project is to address these barriers and assist individuals reducing them. The purpose of this issue, therefore, is to assess whether the Futures program enhanced participants' perceptions about their ability to participate in the employment market.

The focus of the research conducted on this issue has been in the following areas:

- To identify from a list of skills or personal attributes, the specific ones Futures program participants considered to be barriers to their employability;
- To determine whether participants perceived any improvement in the skills or attributes following participation in the program; and
- To determine whether the program was perceived to have had a positive effect in terms of helping reduce the

Exhibit 5

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYABILITY - SKILLS IMPROVEMENT

Skill	(Column 1) % indicating skill was a neutral, minor and major disadvantage before Futures (n=92-95)	(Column 2) % of participants from column 1 indicating program was moderately helpful and very helpful in improving skills	(Column 3) % of all participants indicating program was moderately helpful and very helpful in improving skills (n=91-95)
Writing a resume	61	73 (n=56)	75
Taking care of family matters that interrupt the work day	60	78 (n=46)	81
Completing a job application	59	80 (n=54)	78
Being interviewed for a job	55	80 (n=51)	75
Education	52	52 (n=46)	59
Work Experience	49	48 (n=42)	56
Job Training	48	69 (n=39)	68 (n=85)
Confidence in your ability to work	34	68 (n=31)	75
Generally feeling fit	33	47 (n=30)	66
Health	30	56 (n=27)	66
Dressing appropriately for the job	27	47 (n=19)	58
Working with the same amount of supervision as everyone else at work	25	67 (n=24)	76
Working together with others	21	68 (n=19)	74
Ability to go to work regularly	16	43 (n=14)	71 (n=89)
Ability to be on time	15	61 (n=13)	77

negative effect of barriers to employability.

For our analysis we relied on data received from the telephone survey of Futures program participants. This was judged to be of low overall quality.

Only one research question applied to this issue.

FINDINGS

Do participants say they feel more ready for employment after completing the program?

Exhibit 5 outlines the results of the analysis we conducted. The exhibit is divided in the following manner:

- Column 1 shows participants who said they viewed a skill or disposition as a disadvantage or in a neutral light. A perceived deficit exists for those in this column and this can represent a barrier to employment;
- The second column identifies the percentage of respondents from column 1 who said that the Futures program was moderately or very helpful in improving a skill or disposition; that is, those who felt the program had helped them overcome a skill deficit or barrier to employment; and
- Column 3 shows the percentage of all program participants surveyed who saw the program as moderately helpful or very helpful in improving a skill or disposition.

Column 3 in Exhibit 5 reveals that there was an overall perception by most participants that the program improved their skills. For each skill, 56% or greater of the participants regarded the program as helpful in achieving skills improvement.

Four skills or dispositions identified from Column 1 in Exhibit 5 were seen by the largest percentage of participants as barriers to employability. Within this group, the program was considered beneficial in alleviating barriers on skill deficits by a very high number of people (about three quarters; refer to Column 2). The four skills considered barriers were:

- Writing a resume;
- Taking care of family matters;
- Completing a job application; and
- Being interviewed for a job.

The barriers identified above related more to job finding than to those related to keeping a job. The exception is taking care of family matters. This is probably explained by the fact that 49% of participants are sole support parents.

Some skills and dispositions were considered by a smaller percentage of participants (less than 35%) as barriers, but were viewed by a high percentage of

individuals (roughly 60% and above) as improved by the program.

These included the following which are related more to skills required to keep or maintain a job:

- Confidence in your ability to work;
- Health;
- Working with the same amount of supervision as everyone else at work; and
- Working together with others.

Three skills and dispositions were generally not regarded as barriers and were not perceived as improved by participation in the program. These had the following characteristics: low percentage of individuals regarding them as a barrier and within this group a low percentage indicating they had been improved. The skills and dispositions are:

- Generally feeling fit;
- Dressing appropriately; and
- Ability to go to work regularly.

These relate mostly to life skills which were probably perceived as not improved because the short duration of the program probably does not result in any significant changes in individuals' behaviour patterns.

We separated from the analysis three skills of a generic nature: education, work experience and job training. These were not applicable to the Futures evaluation either because they are general skills or not covered in the course curriculum. All of them were rated by approximately half of all participants as barriers to employability. This suggests that a significant number of individuals entering the program did not regard their education, work experience and job training as sufficiently developed. Our analysis of data bears this out:

- The mean grade level achieved by participants was 10; and
- Most participants had been unemployed for long periods prior to their involvement in Futures.

Education and work experience, were rated by participants among the lowest in terms of improvement. Job training was rated highly in terms of skills improvement.

In addition to assessing skills improvement, the survey of Columbia participants also determined that 76% of participants believed that the program had no significant impact on their home life. Of the 19 participants who believed it did have an impact, 5/19 pointed out that there was less tension at home. All 19 individuals perceived a positive impact on their home life. Difficulties at home can be a significant barrier to employment.

Issue 4

Did the Program improve the participants' financial situation

CONCLUSION

Many participants felt that they were financially better off following participation in the program and this was strongly related to their success in obtaining and maintaining employment. However, there was no strong relationship evident between changes in income reported by participants and their views on their financial situation. Therefore it is uncertain whether the program achieved improvements in participants' financial situation.

ISSUE FOCUS

This issue concentrates on determining whether, as a result of participation in the Futures Program, individuals were able to improve their financial circumstances. For ERN and officials in employability enhancement programs, the desired effect is to give people an ability to find and maintain employment which permits them to increase their standard of living.

For the analysis of this issue we relied solely on data self-reported by respondents to the telephone questionnaire. We were unable to obtain data from government sources concerning the actual amount of income earned by participants. For these reasons, the quality of data used for this analysis was judged to be low.

This issue focused on only one research question:

FINDINGS

Do participants report any change in income?

The discussion of findings for this issue relate to the following two considerations:

- whether participants perceived they were financially better off now than before their participation in the program; and
- whether participants reported any change in income.

We found that 56% of participants perceived that they were financially better off at the time of the telephone survey than before their participation in the program.

Exhibit 6 details the relationship between the categories of employment success discussed in Issue 1 and whether participants felt they were or were not financially better off. We found that participants who found and maintained employment were more likely to indicate that they were financially better off when interviewed than they were before the program.

Of those participants who indicated they did not find employment after Columbia, very few felt they were better off financially when interviewed than they were before the program. Conversely, a large proportion of individuals who found work indicated that they were financially better off.

In assessing the income of participants, we found that 26 individuals (38%) reported a reduction in income from before participation in the program to the present with a mean change of about $3840 dollars per year. Sixteen (23%) indicated their income had increased by a mean amount of $4,646 per year and 26 (38%) reported no change in income. Based on the statistical information at our disposal, it was not possible to explain why these three groups of participants occurred.

We found that there was an anomaly in the relationship between participants perceptions of change in the financial situation and the income they reported. Normally one would think that most participants who reported an increase in income would feel they were financially better off. However, we found that only thirty-three percent of participants who indicated that they had more income six months before the program than now, still believed they were financially better off now than before. Similarly, fifteen percent who felt they had less income before the program than now, believed that they were not now financially better off than before. Finally, of those who believed their income had remained the same before and after the program, 90% indicated they were financially better off.

We tested whether the anomaly of perceived financial well being and reported personal income changing in different directions could be explained by controlling for whether the participant was providing the household's main source of income. It was not.

The mean hourly wage of participants did not change markedly following program participation. Before their involvement in the program, participants were earning an average of $8.00/hr compared to $7.10/hr after. Forty-seven percent of participants (n=40) reported their hourly wage was lower after the program. Forty percent reported that their hourly wage had increased and 12% indicated it did not change. These results generally correspond with results outlined above relating to mean income.

Exhibit 6: Percentage Financially Better Off When Interviewed Than Before Program Participation By Categories of Success

	Better Off	Not Better Off
Never employed	9	91
Employed 35% of the time or less	62	38
Employed between 39% and 70% of time	75	25
Employed over 70% of the time	71	29

Issue 5

What were the costs of the program compared to social assistance?

CONCLUSION

The costs of Futures are likely to be recovered from reduced Social Allowance outlays in an 11 to 18 month period, depending on assumptions made. Social Allowance payments to those continuing to receive social allowance decline for only one group - those who reported being employed more than 70 percent of the time following Futures. Depending on assumptions made about the data, between 6 and 23 percent of participants may either end their use of social allowance following Futures or avoid beginning to use these benefits in the six months after their program.

ISSUE FOCUS

This issue focuses on the cost effectiveness of the Futures program relative to social assistance. It was intended to compare the costs of the Futures program with the costs of providing social assistance to participants.

Four research questions applied to this issue:

- What is the total incremental cost of Futures per participant?
- What is the cost of social assistance for each participant?
- What is the cost of assistance for each successful participant?
- Number of weeks required to recover the cost of a Futures session from social assistance savings.

The second and third research questions both deal with the per participant cost of social assistance. The difference is that the third question looks at the relationship between the employment success of individuals and changes that may have occurred in social assistance costs.

This analysis has proceeded with data from four sources:

- Registration data from Futures program participants;
- Telephone survey of participants;
- Interviews with Futures program officials during the conduct of the evaluation assessment; and
- Alberta Family and Social Services aggregate data.

FINDINGS

What is the total incremental cost per participant of Futures?

We obtained from government officials the per participant cost of the Futures program but were not permitted to release this information. It was therefore not possible to discuss this research question. However, since the program is funded on a per capita basis, there is no concern that incremental costs can creep up but remain hidden from management and stake-holders in lump sum budgets.

What is the cost of social assistance for each participant?

The two data sources for this question present inconsistent findings.

Data from Alberta Family and Social Services show that the average monthly social allowance payment to 65 Futures participants before their participation was $719. The average payment to 66 participants after their participation was $706. As noted in Issue 2 above, these two groups may have been made up of quite different individuals.

The survey data show a slightly different picture. The survey asked past participants in the program whether they had received social assistance in the six month period before and after their involvement in the program. We also asked them how much they had received.

We found that the amount of social assistance reported received by participants declined following participation in the Futures program. The mean amount of assistance reported received decreased slightly from $668.50 per month per person before participation in the program to $649.00 per month afterwards. These averages were based on responses from 60 participants who reported the amount of assistance received before the program and 53 participants who reported the amount of social allowance received after completing Futures. The result would represent a decline in the total amount paid out monthly by the government

from $40,110 to $34,397: a difference of approximately $5,700.

What is the cost of social assistance for each successful Futures participant?

In analyzing this research question we employed the four categories of success described earlier (Issue 1). For each category we calculated the average amount of social assistance surveyed participants reported receiving before and after the program. We focused on the 40 participants reporting that they received social allowance payments both before and after Futures to ensure comparability. This allowed us to compare the relationship between the employment history of participants and the social assistance received, before and after the Future program. Exhibit 7 outlines this comparison.

The exhibit shows that Futures participants who reported continuing to draw social allowance benefits following completion of the program used somewhat less than before taking the program. The group reporting the highest level of employment reported the largest reduction in dependence. This finding must be treated with considerable caution since Alberta government data indicate more individuals in this group than the number who responded in this way to the survey. However, the Alberta government data show a similar pattern of change to that shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7: Mean Monthly Income from Social Assistance (Respondents Reporting Receipt of Social Allowance both Before and After Futures)

Category of Success	Before Futures ($)	After Futures ($)
no employment after Futures (n=13)	699	639
employed 38% of time after Futures or less (n=12)	665	675
employed between 39% and 70% of time after Futures (n=8)	724	725
employed greater than 71% of the time after Futures (n=7)	746	588
Total (n=40)	702	658

Number of weeks required to recover the cost of a Futures session from social assistance.

This research question focused on measuring the relative cost effectiveness of the program compared to social assistance. It involves a comparison of the cost of the program with the social savings that were achieved following the intervention.

To determine the costs of Futures sessions we were, as indicated above, told in confidence the per capita fee for the program. We added upper and lower percentage increments, estimated by departmental administrators, to this fee to arrive at minimum and maximum estimates of the total per capita cost of Futures.

Two sets of data were available to estimate savings - government data and survey data. Each had strengths and weaknesses. Both data sets yielded upper and lower estimates of cost savings.

The upper and lower cost estimates and the minimum and maximum savings estimates, for each data set, provided a range of estimates of the time required to pay back the cost of Futures from social allowance savings.

In our view, the best estimate of the time required to capture the cost of Futures from social allowance savings is between 11 and 18 months. This is given by the low cost estimate and the savings estimates provided by the survey. Details on how this was calculated are provided in Appendix V.

Issue: 6

What interventions contribute most to increasing employability?

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding our investigation into alternatives for program delivery, our assessment of the program components revealed they were generally regarded as making a positive contribution to increasing participants' employability. No particular program component was singled out as being especially effective, which probably reflects the short duration of the program and the fact that the program components were not clearly distinguishable within the course curriculum.

The only exception is the Life and Employment skills which was more helpful to those who had no success in employment compared to those who were successful.

ISSUE FOCUS

An important objective of ERN is to determine which approaches to employability enhancement work and which do not. For program officials, information of this kind is also vital, since it can provide indications as to how

Exhibit 8: Percentage of Participants Who Regarded Each Program Component as Moderately Helpful to Very Helpful

	0%	38% and less	39% to 70%	71% or greater
Orientation	76	52	71	74
Assessment	70	68	68	84
Workshops on life and employment skills	**86**	65	67	75
Workshops on job search	81	50	**88**	**85**
Workshops on keeping a job	79	58	76	70
Job search activity	75	**71**	80	70

the program might be altered to maximize its beneficial effect on participants.

This issue addresses these information requirements by assessing each component of the Futures program in terms of its effect on participants' views of this employability. This involved an investigation of the following research questions:

- What elements of the project training skills you learned do you use in your job?
- What skills were helpful in finding a job?
- Which experiences/training were less useful?

In conducting our analysis we relied heavily on data provided by the participants' telephone survey. As indicated in Exhibit 1, we judge these data to have low reliability and robustness.

FINDINGS

What elements of the project training skills you learned do you use in your job?

The data obtained during the study did not permit us to address this research question directly. We directed our analysis toward comparing participants' evaluations of each program component with the program success category

into which the participants fell. Exhibit 8 outlines this relationship.

There is no strong pattern to the results to suggest that as participants become more successful in employment (e.g. move from 0% to 38% and less) a greater percentage are likely to regard every program component as helpful in assisting them in looking for or keeping a job. Rather, across all categories of success and for each component of the program, save one, there was a recognition by the majority of participants that the program was helpful to their employment situation.

The only exception to this rule occurred for participants who were employed 38% or less of the time - they were equally divided on the merits of the Job Search Workshop on job search. Only 50% in this category regarded the workshop on job search as either moderately helpful or very helpful.

In the top two categories of success, the Workshop on Job Search was seen as helpful by the largest proportion of those employed. Among those who did not find employment, the Life Skills component was seen as helpful by the largest proportion. For those who worked after Futures participation but only 38% of the time or less, the Job Search Activity was seen as helpful by the largest proportion of participants.

These results indicate that even participants who had little employment related success following program participation found the program helpful because of its Life Skills component. Individuals who had greater employment success found the Workshop on Job Search or the Job Search Activity most helpful.

Another aspect of our analysis examined whether a relationship existed between the skills improvement participants perceived and the degree to which participants found each program component helpful.

We looked at the following group of skills assessed in the telephone survey which were selected because they were key job keeping skills;

- Taking care of family matters;
- Confidence in the ability to work;
- Working with the same supervision as everyone else at work;
- Ability to be on time; and
- Dressing appropriately for the job.

We found that of those participants who indicated their skills had been improved by the program, a high percentage also rated each program component as helpful. Of those individuals who did not perceive any skills improvement a much lower percentage (usually about 20% or more lower) considered the components helpful. This suggests that, for those participants who perceived they derived some benefit from the program, there was a clear and positive linkage between their perception of skills

improvement and the intervention of each program component in achieving this improvement. Our analysis did not indicate, however, that participants singled out certain components as being of greater importance than others. This may reflect the short duration of the program and the fact that the program components were not emphatically distinguished from one another.

What skills were helpful in finding a job?

While the previous research question focused on keeping a job, this question involves an analysis of another feature of employability pertinent to the ERN initiative: the ability of program participants to find a job. We investigated the improvement participants perceived in their skills and the degree to which they regarded program components as helpful, relative to whether they were successful in finding a job.

Exhibit 9 outlines the difference in perception between participants who found a job and those that did not concerning how helpful each program component was in assisting them in looking for or keeping a job.

For both groups of participants (those who found a job and those who did not) every program component was found to be helpful. Except for Life and Employment skills there were no major differences in perceptions about the program components between those who found a job and those that did not. For this program component a much higher proportion of participants who did not find a job (86% compared to 69%) regarded the program component as helpful.

Our analysis also looked at the differences in perception concerning skills improvement between those who found a job and those who did not. We could find no major differences between these two groups. However, as indicated in Issue 3, there was a general recognition by a large proportion of all participants that the program assisted them in improving their skills.
The four key barriers to obtaining employment identified by Futures participants were resume writing, dealing with family matters, being interviewed for a job, and completing a job application. From this we conclude that the program elements dealing with Job Search and Life Skills were among the most important and useful to the participants.

Which experiences/training were less useful?

This research question involves determining which program components were perceived by participants to be less useful than others in terms of their contribution to individuals' employability enhancement. Exhibit 10 outlines the ratings given by participants about the helpfulness of the programs.

Exhibit 9: Percentage Who Felt the Program Components Were Moderately Helpful to Very Helpful

	Found a job	Did not find a job
Orientation	67	76
Assessment	72	70
Life and employment skills	69	86
Workshops on job search	76	81
Workshop on keeping a job	69	79
Job search activity	74	75

Exhibit 10: Rating of Helpfulness of Program Components

Program Component	Mean (n=90-93)*	% a little helpful or not at all helpful
Orientation	4.0	10
Assessment	4.1	10
Workshops on life and employment skills	4.1	9
Workshops on keeping a job	4.1	15
Workshops on job search	4.1	10
Job search activity	4.1	12

* 4=moderately helpful; 5=very helpful

The exhibit reveals that only a small percentage of participants regarded any program component as less helpful. No one component was singled out as being regarded by a higher percentage of participants as less helpful compared to other components.

Discussion

Two findings emerged that did not pertain to any of the issues investigated here but were relevant to the Futures program.

First, the program has clearly evolved from its earlier role as a front end for the Employment Assistance Program. Only 7 of these participants had their wages subsidized by EAP following program participation, including one who used EAP briefly twice. Four others had used EAP prior to taking the Futures program. This element of job subsidy/matching is no longer a central part of the program. It should be noted, however, that in other programs evaluated by ERN, this type of activity/service has proven useful as a way of strengthening the experience and resumes of young or handicapped job seekers.

Second, complementing the above observation, Futures has evolved away from a dependence on social worker referrals for its clients. Only 49 per cent (n=90) of the participants who responded to the survey reported being referred to Futures by a social worker. There were no systematic differences in success between those referred to the program and those who entered it in other ways.

5
RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Referrals from social agencies should continue, but if there are possibilities for further expanding the outreach of the program to the Calgary community, at large, these should be explored. (See Discussion)

2. We recognize that the Futures program once involved job "matching" or placement with the Employment Assistance Program (EAP) and that this is now no longer a key aspect of operations. The study found, however, that participants regarded job experience as an important barrier to their employability. It was also evident that, notwithstanding their lack of experience, many participants were successful in finding and maintaining employment.

   We recommend that in delivering its program the Futures' staff consider whether opportunities may exist to identify, during the two week course, those individuals, for example the young and the handicapped, who may most benefit from job placements under the EAP. (See Issues 1 and 3)

3. The program should consider enhancing its processes for referring clients to other agencies, including other programs offered by the Columbia Institute of Canada, if they express a need for some educational upgrading, especially if they intend to seek further job related, job specific training elsewhere. (See Issue 3)

4. The program should explore further with referral agencies the specific reasons why native Canadians and single people exhibit greater difficulty in their employment situation and take any corrective action that is possible or feasible. (See Issue 1)

5. The program should continue to ensure that job finding skills development continues as a key aspect of operations. (See Issue 3)

6. Program officials should ensure that aspects of the program which lend assistance to single parents in making family arrangements continue. (See Issue 3)

6.
CONCLUSION

Overall, our study revealed that the Futures program is making a valuable contribution to the employability enhancement of social assistance recipients. The program is improving the ability of individuals to obtain and maintain employment, particularly sole support parents, but is less effective with single people and native canadians. This employment related success is related to the program's achievement of improved skills, particularly those for job finding which were considered key barriers to employability. The barriers to employability of inadequate education and lack of job experience were not addressed by the two week long program and saw little improvement.

With respect to Social Allowance dependence, the survey showed about one third of participants who had been receiving Social Allowance moving off social allowance while another group began receiving it. Overall, the survey showed a net reduction of about 13 percent of participants on Social Allowance. Alberta government data show results that can be interpreted as consistent with this conclusion, depending on the assumptions made about the aggregate data provided. In both cases there is little reduction in the average monthly payment made. These results cannot be attributed solely to the effect of Futures on the participants but certainly incorporate the effect of the program.

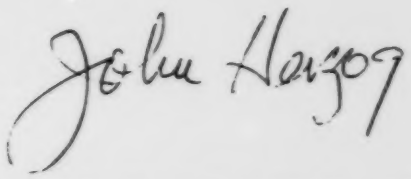
It was uncertain whether participants improved their financial situation, as a result of the program, even though participants who had employment success felt they were financially better off now than before the program.

In areas where we felt improvement in the program might be possible we have provided recommendations above.

In general, the program has provided a good opportunity with which to evaluate the operations of an employability enhancement program located in Western Canada directed at social assistance recipients.

Our thanks are extended to the staff of the Futures program and officials in Alberta Career Development and Employment, and Alberta Social Services who assisted us in the conduct of this evaluation study.

THE COOPERS & LYBRAND CONSULTING GROUP



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